Human rights condition for import of Goods

*203. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of countries which have putforth human rights condition for importing goods from India;

(b) the details of countries which have decided not to import goods in which child labour is engaged for production;

(c) whether any country has stopped or reduced imports from India on the grounds of human rights or child-labour;

(d) if so, the details thereof, country-wise; and

(e) the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) and (b) No country has put forth conditions regarding human rights condition or use of child labour in production of goods which are imported by it from India.

(c) and (d) No country by conscious act of its Government has stopped or reduced imports from India on grounds of human rights or child labour. However, export of certain goods from India to some developed countries might have been affected because of the adverse publicity launched by some interested groups in the importing countries and misconceptions among importers regarding the situation with respect to use of child labour in production of goods in India.

(e) Concrete measures are being taken by Government of India especially through our Missions abroad, to counter the adverse publicity and to sensitize the concerned governments, opinion makers, importers and the general public regarding these issues.

SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that almost all the countries including those developed countries which the hon. Minister has mentioned in his reply, except India—I want to stress the point that all the countries except India—when it suits them, try to stop imports from wherever they are originating to save their industry and to save their jobs? This is a feature which is there in almost all the countries. I want to know from the Minister (a) which are the countries, from the Indian point of view, where we have the highest deficit and if he can give me the names of four or five countries, in a diminishing order, where we have the highest deficit and, (b) which are the commodities which are being stopped or disturbed under the garb of human rights or child labour or any other garb. To the best of my knowledge, it is mainly textiles and those products where we have supremacy and they don't want these commodities to enter their countries and so they are taking this plea under that. So, which are the areas where we have the highest deficit country-wise and which are the commodities, say, three or four, in order of preference, which are being denied entry or stopped or restricted because of our supremacy in those areas?

DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, actually, no country in the world has prohibited import of goods on the question of employing child labour in manufacturing those goods. However, NGOs in some countries made a propaganda that child labour was being used, and they wanted to discourage people in those countries from using those items. However, I can say definitely that this has not been enforced anywhere in the world. We are exporting our goods continuously to all countries, and we are doing it under normal conditions.

The hon. Member asked for the deficit and other things. I do not have data on countrywise deficits. The main question is whether any country has stopped or reduced imports on the ground of child labour. I want to tell you very clearly that some countries are trying to pass laws but no country has yet passed any law. No country has prohibited the use of any imported goods. A propaganda against the use of our products is being made, but we are sure that we will be able to export our products without any difficulty.

SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: I want to know the countries which are trying to stop import of our products on the ground of human rights or child labour and the products that they are trying to stop. They are trying to stop them; they might not have stopped them.

DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the main product against which the use of child labour has been propagated is carpet. It happened first in the United States. They have tried to persuade a number of Senators to bring forward different types of Bills in the Senate-Senator Tom Hackin, a Democrat, wanted prohibition of these things. Mr. Joseph Kennedy in 1996 tried to do so. Mr. Christopher Smith also made some representation. In the European Parliament also Mr. Frank wanted prohibition of these things. Organisations of different types of people wanted it, but no country has been able to pass any legislation. They are not able to do it. In order to withstand this sort of propaganda, they have started a label called "Calin". This is the logo which they have developed. They collect .25 per cent of the FOB value of the export to support the affected families in the carpet industry where child labour is used. They are trying to help those families and to rehabilitate them. They are able to do it continuously. They are able to successfully implement it without any difficulty. We are exporting our products continuously, and we are increasing our exports.

Thank you, Sir.

SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Sir, as the Minister may be aware, almost all countries, when a product does not suit them, create a lot of paper work and other impediments against the particular products so that, even though its import is not prohibited or even though its import is allowed, in actual practice, it will take ages before it can really enter those countries. This is how they protect their local industries. They do this in spite of having signed the WTO or the GATT, whatever the case may be. This is so in almost all countries except India. Will the hon. Minister consider taking suitable measures against the hindrance being created by these countries, in spite of being signatories to the WTO, against import of our goods into their countries, which has the danger of loss of employment in our country?

DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, in fact, child labour is prohibited as per our Supreme Court judgement. We are taking measures, and we have rehabilitated a number of children. We have started a number of schools to educate those children so that they would be rehabilitated at different places.

About the WTO, the WTO has made it very clear that the question of child labour should be considered only by the ILO as per its rules and regulations.

They said that they cannot use any other method. We made it very clear at the Ministerial Conference in Singapore that it is the I.L.O. and not the W.T.O., which can go into the question of alternation in the labour use.

SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Sir, they have created some paper work or some hindrance in almost all countries to restrict import of goods from

developing countries. Though we are a signatory to the W.T.O., we would like to know how those hindrances or impediments, by whatever name they are called, are removed to save our industries and our labour employed. This is a very specific question.

DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH: Sir, since no definite law or prohibition exists, it is a question of our own people going there and creating demand for our own products. They have to show the superiority of our goods and have also to deal with the notions that are created by these agencies. If any law or prohibition was introduced there, I would have brought it to the notice of the House. Therefore, at present I can only explain the position as it obtains there.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Sir, since early 80s, rich countries in Europe and North America in particular, have been trying to impose all kinds of protective measures against the interests of the developing countries' exports. On the one hand, they have been advising us to liberalise and globalise our economy; on the other they are undertaking restrictive measures. They are forcing 'Voluntary exports restraints' on us to fix quota on our exports. They are resorting to anti-dumping measures in the name of human rights, child labour, labour standards and they are also threatening to put an embargo. These apart, as the hon. Minister has just now referred to, they are now reporting to different types of labelling in order to influence the consumers in their countries. In the name of environment, they are putting eco-labels. In all these countries they have set up some associations, which are putting stamps on the imported goods to show whether they are eco-friendly or not. In most cases they are laying down certain specifications to serve their own industrial interests. This way they are deliberately restricting exports of the developing countries. Since they cannot compete with them, by these measures they are trying to increase the cost of production of the developing countries, thus restricting their exports. Instead of succumbing to their pressures, I would advise the hon. Minister to stand up and fight, as he should have done at the W.T.O. We should assert that labelling is not only discriminatory, but is also an attempt to ensure that the third world countries do not industrialise. That point has to be made out very strongly at the world forums. I hope the hon. Minister will do that.

DR. B. B. RAMAIAH: Sir, at the W.T.O., we have made it quite clear that it cannot take up the question of child labour. It can be dealt with only by the I.L.O. This was approved and accepted as part of its decision.

Coming back to the propaganda carried on by NGOs mainly to discourage our products in affluent countries, I would like to say that we have to counteract their measures by taking our own manufactured goods there with our logo and some special trade mark so that the people there could know that product with a particular trademark is reliable and that there is no child labour involved. These measures will attract the people to purchase our goods. The agencies resorting to these measures to restrict the export of our goods try to create an impression that their Government is going to pass some legislation to put an embargo on our goods. Unless there is some sort of an Act, prohibition, restriction or fixation of quota, we cannot come into the picture. That is why we are also not able to counteract.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Your logo would not work to influence the American or European consumers, because labelling or stamping put by them on our products will have greater impact on the mind of the people there. My point is that you will have to oppose it at the Government level to ensure that our products are not

stamped or labelled by them. The specifications which they impose do not conform to our industrial interests.

SHRI SURINDER KUMAR SINGLA: Sir, is he asking a question or entering into a debate? He has the full right to advise, but...

DR. B.B. RAMAIAH: Sir, I will consider the valuable suggestions given by the hon. Member.

श्री जनार्दन यादव: सभापति महोदय, मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूं कि मिर्जापुर और भदोही में जो कालीन इंडस्ट्री है, उसमें बच्चों का कालीन बनाने के काम में उपयोग किया जाता है और जब वह कालीन बनकर आप विदेशों में एक्सपोर्ट करते हैं तो क्या वहां उसका विरोध होता है और उसको जलाया जाता है?

DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, if the hon. Member can bring the specific case to my notice, I will find out which country has done it and what has happened to it. The Carpet Export Council has voluntarily taken over the responsibility and is trying to see that child labour is not utilised. If there is any child labour, they are using their own resources by allotting 0.25 per cent, as I said earlier, as the FOB value and ensuring that the child labour is rehabilitated by imparting some training and by having some educational programmes.

SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, despite what the Minister has stated we have read in the newspapers that our textile exports to the United States have slowed down very considerably over the past quarter. This is precisely because of various objections that have been raised with respect to the so-called observance of human rights conditions. Now, I would humbly ask the Minister whether we have prepared any countervailing measures to reverse the pressure which the United States Government is trying to put on us. I find amongst our Ministers a certain attitude of lese Majeste the moment the name of the United States is mentioned as if that country is abvoe all criticism. I would like to know from the Minister why we can't set up our own research and investigation team to find out human labour conditions in the United States itself, how they treat their black labour, how they treat their women labour so that when this thing is placed formally before the ILO and the WTO, we can be ready with our arguments.

DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Member has raised a specific issue of our exports to the United States. So far as our textile exports to the United States are concerned, this year there is a slight decline in our exports due to recession in that country. They want to take their own decisions on various issues. There is one thing which I would like to bring to the notice of the House. They have put the anti-dumping rule against our woollen goods. We approached the WTO. The WTO said that they were not doing the right thing. Then, they lifted this anti-dumping rule. Now, we are going ahead with export of our products. In rupee terms we exported 21.2 per cent; and in dollar terms we exported 12.1 per cent. This is not recession. We have not reduced our exports. As the hon. Member has said the rate of exports has slightly declined.

भारतीय खाद्य निगम के गोदामों में चूहों तथा नमी के कारण गेहूं और चावल का बरबाद होना

*204. **श्री नरेन्द्र मोहन:** क्या खाद्य मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि गत तीन वर्षों के दौरान भारतीय खाद्य निगम के गोदामों में चूहों और नमी के कारण गेहूं और चावल की कितनी मात्रा बरबाद हो गई?

खाद्य मंत्री तथा नागरिक आपूर्ति, उपभोक्ता मामले और सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्री (श्री देवेन्द्र प्रसाद यादव): एक विवरण सभा पटल पर रखा जा रहा है।